More effective follow-up: saving time using technology

**Purpose:** Pilot study to test anecdote that using a listed number with SMS notification leads to better contact rates and therefore time savings.

**Method:** An existing activity of following up patients after regional anaesthetic via phone was selected and ethics exemption achieved to trial using a standard SMS to alert patients of the identity and purpose of the follow-up phone call before the subsequent call. The SMS before the call group and traditional follow up by phone groups were randomly selected in this trial from those that underwent procedures between June and August 2020. The SMS message also included an option for patients to opt not to be contacted. Primary endpoint being response rate with secondary end points of client satisfaction with the process.

**Results:** The graphs include the total number and relative response rates. Most notable from a time perspective is that it took 1 attempt with the novel method to get a response from 75% of patients. The traditional de-identified phone technique had only 40% of patients answer the first phone call attempt. Keeping with this figure 60% of respondents stated they appreciated the SMS pre-notification or would not have answered without it. Interestingly only with multiple attempts of many days did the response rate from the traditional method approached the same rate that 1 attempt with the novel method achieved.

**Conclusions:** This study showed that higher contact rates and patient appreciation can be achieved when using technology. As using identified contact details with SMS notifications can save considerable time in this process and achieve better outcomes it may benefit many activities. Further areas of interest in this research vein include the assessment of completely automated surveys and whether they can obtain comparable results with minimal time cost to the clinical team performing follow up.